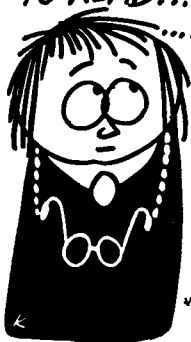


to reduce the confusion," writes Mr. Schlesinger. "Such economic furniture as stocked his mind was most conventional . . ." On one day he could speak spacioously of the need for great government undertakings to resolve the depression, and the next, of the need of government retrenchment. Sometimes he even managed to combine the two contrasting thoughts in the same speech. Yet the author, even so, is inclined to give him high marks in 1932 as an energizer of ideas—primarily, it would seem, because he himself was wholly wedded to none of them. Hoover, on the other hand, was doomed because he was the prisoner of his own strict views. For him "the fatal line always remained one step beyond anything he was prepared to do himself." So, in the end, their approach was as opposite after all as black and white—one man rigid and presumably logical by his own standards, and the other wide-open and pragmatic, even if sometimes a bit confusing—and Mr. Schlesinger is all for the white side.

THIS REVIEW does not intend to argue preferences. But it may be that Mr. Schlesinger has fallen victim to the historical fallacy of hindsight—in this case, of attributing to F.D.R. an ideological generalship in the miasma of 1932 which actually he developed only later on, after victory. Or he may be inclined to the sheer pragmatic conclusion that Roosevelt's views in 1932 must have been better, because Roosevelt won. In any case, powerful as this book is on many a page, it appears to lose much of the drama as well as much of the truth of the turbulent days it records by casting them so much in terms of a battle of bright angels against historical devils, without intervening human shades of gray.

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George Kennan

On the Russian Revolution

DAVID DEMAREST LLOYD

RUSSIA LEAVES THE WAR, by George F. Kennan. Princeton University Press. \$7.50.

This first volume of Mr. Kennan's projected work on Soviet-U.S. relations from 1917 to 1920 is a great book if only because of the profound humility its author displays before the stubborn and elusive facts of history. Deservedly it has won the National Book Award for 1956. Here is a historian with the discipline of a diplomatist, who, in an alien land, knows what it is to search for the grains of truth amid storms of deception, rumor, and propaganda. Mr. Kennan himself has waited for the cable of instructions from Washington that never comes or comes too late, has seen his colleagues swept by waves of passionate sympathy or revulsion for the human beings it is their duty to regard with an impersonal calm, and has watched a chain of little blunders grow into momentous and irreversible events.

This is not in the usual sense a story of Soviet-U.S. relations in the winter of 1917-1918; it is a story of the personalities on whom those relations rested, from the Negro valet of the American Ambassador at one end of the scale, dodging machine-gun fire on the Liteiny Prospekt, to Lenin at the other, sneering at the western diplomats in his office in the Smolny Institute. All the dramatic personae are carefully drawn, their correspondence carefully examined, the conflicting versions of their exchanges compared.

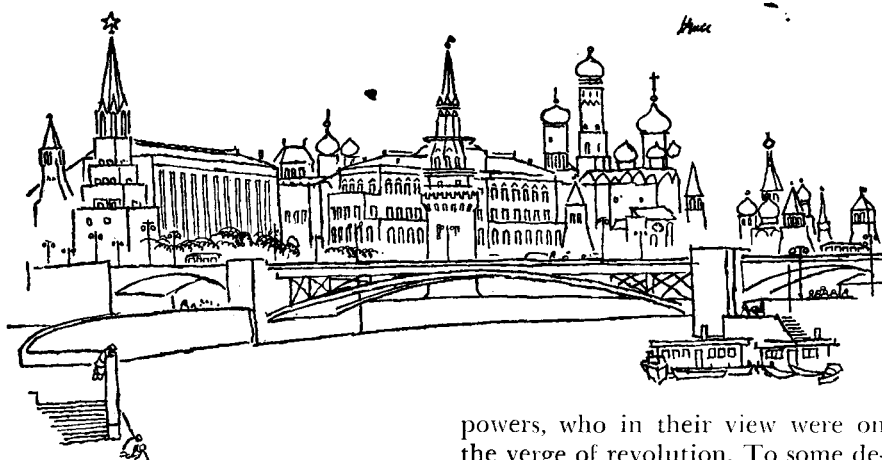
The pages that result glow with a fascination, a liveliness, and a human truth comparable to those of a great novel on the heroic Victorian scale. But this method has not been pursued for the sake of entertainment; it is an effort to excavate the actual event from beneath four decades of impassioned controversy, propaganda, and recrimination. To the fullest possible extent, this effort has been successful, and where

the sources fail and the trail peters out, the author has been frank to say so, and refrains from adding his conjectures. This is that rarest of historical works, the definitive account, which only great historians are privileged to write.

Out of the War

This volume covers the period from November 7, 1917, the eve of the Bolshevik seizure of power, to March 16, 1918, the date of the ratification of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk—the four months that gave birth to most of the dilemmas and controversies that have vexed our policy toward the Bolshevik state ever since. Mr. Kennan makes it clear that there was never a chance that the Bolsheviks might resume the war against Germany or act in co-operation with the Allies, yet he shows why many Americans thought that they might do so.

In their attitudes toward foreign powers, Lenin and Trotsky represented a new type of character, never before seen on the diplomatic stage, which was virtually impossible to understand. Many Americans, as Mr. Kennan points out, felt a sympathy for the Russian revolutionists, and tended to identify their motives and ideals with those of the Founding Fathers and the New Freedom reformers at home. More than this, American foreign policy needed Russia as a member of the community of western nations not only because a war was being desperately fought—then as all too few years later—but because Russia was necessary to fill out the pattern of international society as we intuitively felt it to be constituted. Secretary of State Lansing, to whom Mr. Kennan attributes a sharp wisdom on this point, might disabuse President Wilson of any illusions on the score of Bolshevik humanitarianism, but even he shrank from any suggestion of dismembering Russia.



One strange but fortunate aspect of those dramatic four months was that a sounder, if vaguer, understanding of the Bolshevik phenomenon seems to have prevailed in the State Department and the White House than was the case among the Americans in the hurly-burly at Petrograd. At the scene of the revolution there were not only our Ambassador, a staunch but aging Missouri Democrat, David R. Francis, and his career staff, but also an array of special missions and agencies, whose officers felt it their duty to shape the foreign policy of the United States, as their successors did in many American embassies during the Second World War. Some of these gentlemen, from the best of motives as Mr. Kennan makes clear, violently espoused the cause of aid to the Bolsheviks, and pulled all the wires they could through their Washington offices to change the cautious and reserved attitude of the State Department and the President.

The Puzzled Onlookers

For the most part their efforts were unsuccessful, although many of the proponents of friendship for the Bolsheviks felt that they had helped bring about the President's famous Fourteen Points speech. These liberal sentiments, according to the author, were utterly meaningless to either the Bolsheviks, wrapped in their class-war dogma, or to the Russian masses, concerned primarily with food and peace and politically voiceless anyway. Yet Wilson continued to appeal to the Russian people, over the heads of the Bolsheviks while Lenin and Trotsky continued vainly to address the toiling and exploited peoples of the bourgeois

powers, who in their view were on the verge of revolution. To some degree these misunderstandings of political realities continue to plague Soviet-U.S. relations to this day.

This first monumental volume gives a clue to the success of the Bolsheviks which no doubt will be developed later in the series. By a historical coincidence the Marxist-Leninist doctrines, however fantastic and erroneous, however deficient in historical understanding and limited in vision, provided the perfect rationale for those measures which were necessary to the Bolsheviks for seizing and keeping power. Their policy was the single-minded pursuit of power in Russia. Their dogma not only justified this end but confined them to it, and kept them from being diverted from it by any considerations for the prestige or welfare of their country, or for its future relations with foreign nations. Hence the puzzle they presented abroad. Neither defeat nor humiliation nor foreign occupation of part of their territory, nor the disorganization of their country, nor any considerations of patriotism or honor, nor the hope of foreign aid or of international approval, had any influence over them. Their success, peculiar to the times in which it was achieved, cemented the doctrine with the policy.

In circumstances other than the frightful despair and confusion of 1917-1918, the Bolsheviks could not have succeeded. For us today, hope lies in the fact that their successors may be compelled to realize that this doctrine of theirs is not eternally valid, and therefore does not justify a policy that is nothing but a naked seeking after power, with the inevitable consequences of internal horror and ultimate disaster.

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The Prejudices Of Invidious Albion

GOUVERNEUR PAULDING

JOURNEY OF AN AMERICAN, by Albion Ross. Bobbs-Merrill. \$4.50.

Once, in an interval between foreign assignments for the *New York Times*, Mr. Ross lived for a while in a city he loathes more than any other. "For me," he writes, "there is no other environment in the world that so blatantly blasphemes against the aspirations of the human spirit." When the *Queen Mary* took him off on his travels again he "stood out in the winter night on her deserted afterdeck and watched the lights of New York fade slowly. Never have I known a happiness so intense. The faith given me by my father before he died was blurred and weak but I kneeled in the darkness and tried to give thanks for my escape from that city."

Plenty of Americans before Mr. Ross have been dissatisfied with New York. Even plenty of New Yorkers from time to time tire of the place, but a week's vacation in the country, a night in Philadelphia, sends them happily home again. The only people who really go away and stay away do so not because they love New York less—or think they hate it—but because they love some place else the more. That is actually the case with Mr. Ross.

Crowds vs. People

When Mr. Ross talks about New York, or indeed about the United States generally, he is really talking about all the cities of our modern

civilization. When he is in them he feels very much alone. Loneliness in the crowd is a well-known theme, and so are discussions of how modern city concentrations came about, and what they have cost. Diagnosing the evil in city life—and again, city life is only the extension of all modern civilized life—is perhaps a useful thing to do, but it is certainly not a novel occupation. Satirists were already at work in the days of imperial Rome.

It would be more original and useful now, since we have the cities and are likely to have them, bigger and bigger, for a long time to come, to start commenting on the obviously successful resistance the men and women who inhabit them have put up against all pressures to conform and be mechanized. Books attempting the task would no doubt be difficult to write; they could not be propped up with all the dreary jargon in which the pessimists deplore mass media and so forth; they would require a deeply poetic insight into the secrets of the heart.

It is the paradox of *Journey of an American* that Mr. Ross possesses this insight to a high degree. Whenever he travels, except in the New York subway—forgive and forget Mr. Ross on New York—he shows that he understands and cares for people. That is why this correspondent's autobiography is no mere collection of pieces from his files. Mr. Ross is a complicated man, romantic about his American tradition and about peasantry as the basis for the only possible way of life, yet perfectly aware of the danger of systematization.

In two lucid sentences he shows the dilemma that he has to face: "The mind seldom understands a reality that is not distorted by coherence, unity and emphasis. Human reality is neither coherent, unified nor, in general, especially emphatic." *Journey of an American* is a lyric

book in which the important things are not what the author hates and occasionally works into too rigid a system but what he observes directly, understands, and loves.

Lebanon, Austria, Africa

These loves of his are happily unexpected and stimulating. Lebanon suddenly appears as a very wonderful country indeed: "In the Lebanon there was no way to be just like everyone else because there was no everyone else to be like. There was no average man." Austria is a wonderful country because it has given up its indulgence in self-pity over its lost empire and aspires to become another Switzerland.

And the Boers are a wonderful people. Their doctrine of Apartheid has a side to it that is not only understandable but rather beautiful: These Dutch immigrants have made a language of their own; they have held onto pioneer tradition; they are in great danger because there has risen a city, Johannesburg, to threaten them; British and modern civilization is threatening them, and yet they still are stubborn, they still hold on. What Apartheid means at its best is that the Dutch want only to be a white tribe among the black. The Dutch in Africa are a lonely people content to be alone. In practice, Mr. Ross is well aware, Apartheid simply is detestable.

The blacks in Africa, to Mr. Ross, are an even more lonely people—ageless, lost in their own country, threatened not only by a few Dutch, British, and French colonialists who sooner or later will be absorbed or thrown out, but threatened also with being uprooted from their immemorial family and tribal traditions. Eloquently and sadly, Mr. Ross maintains that all the rest of us have already been uprooted.

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